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PROGRAMMES AND POLICIES OF THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR NATURAL DISASTER REDUCTION

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR INTERFACE

From disaster management to sustainable development: How the public sector, private sector and voluntary organizations can work together

Addendum

Summaries of presentations

Coping with disasters: a culture in Egypt

Summary of presentation by Professor Mahmoud Mohammed Mahfouz
Chairman, Public Services Committee of the Shoura (Senate)
Assembly and former Minister of Health, Egypt

With 95 per cent of its land arid and uninhabitable, Egyptians have been vulnerable to a wide range of disasters for thousands of years. Community traditions to cope with flash floods from the Nile River, drought from the Sahara desert, conflicts and other catastrophes have ancient origins. Disasters were perceived as "acts of God". Some ancient traditions were practical, while others were founded on fatalism, superstition and sacrifice.

Egypt's disaster legislation was based on civil defense concepts following World War II and the 1948 war. After the peace treaty of 1979, civil defense was expanded to include natural disasters. This legislation reflected the growing twentieth century recognition that, with the help of technology, countries can successfully manage disasters.

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This legislation, however, was not enough. The earthquake of October 1992 showed disaster management weaknesses due to lack of pre-disaster coordination. No set and tested mechanisms for coordination between different government departments were in place; the function of NGOs and private firms was not clear; there was a lack of comprehensive mechanisms to coordinate national and provincial activities; no measures were in place to mobilize community support in an effective way.

The Egyptian Senate subsequently adopted, in March 1993, a report entitled "About a National Plan to Combat Natural and Man-made Disasters". Based on a conference sponsored by the World Health Organization and the International Civil Defence Organization, attended by top-level government officers, academics and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Egyptian Government officially adopted a document on "National Policy and Strategy for Emergency Management in Egypt", (November 1993) and the Egyptian Civil Protection Organization was recognized as the overall coordinating agency for emergency preparedness and response in Egypt.

In the process, Egyptians have discovered that the planning process to prepare for emergencies is similar and related to the process of socio-economic planning. To build consensus for a single coordinating plan requires patience, as the overall plan must include the activities of various services, such as health, public works, social welfare, etc. The health sector alone, for example, needs a functional sub-plan that fits into the overall national plan. This health sector sub-plan must include activities of such diverse partners as the Ministry of Health; the Red Crescent Society and other NGOs; private firms operating clinics, ambulances, and other medical services; and medical universities which can provide training and conduct applied research.

In another example, the national planning process has been helpful in clarifying the role of the Research Academy, as there were some partners who had expected it to coordinate the country's emergency management because it represents the IDNDR national committee in Egypt.

In conclusion, while there is now a strong political will to improve Egypt's prevention and preparedness approach to disasters, the task of coordination is time-consuming and requires patience. The risk remains that the momentum will be lost among some of the partners needed in the process. Advocacy at the international level will help keep up the momentum.

Relationship between public and private sector in emergency prevention and preparedness: the Italian experience

Summary of presentation by Ing. Carlo Presenti, Head, Department of National Technical Services, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Italy

Research and technical services are crucial to successful emergency management. It is because of the importance of applied research, in fact, that

IDNDR was initially declared. Researchers break the barriers of current knowledge in order to master phenomena which are perceived as "beyond

control". Scientific research gives countries up-to-date technical tools to assess their territory's vulnerability and monitor disaster management systems.

To make the best use of the "added value" of research, countries need an emergency management policy that is well thought out. The policy should be based on the comparative advantages of all partners: public authorities, the private sector and voluntary organizations. This includes research and technical capacities of institutes, companies and universities.

Roles and responsibilities of each partner should be based on technical capabilities and cost-effectiveness. Otherwise it could be counter-productive. Two of the most common mistakes:

- Public authorities have a tendency to delegate day-to-day disaster prevention and preparedness management activities to outside partners such as universities. They do it to save money.

- The public sector is often passive in disaster management. Because of its profit orientation, the private sector is pro-active. It lobbies for specific equipment/systems which may not be necessary and are usually quite expensive.

This is what happened in Italy, with the result that the country is still backward in terms of prevention and preparedness. Using outside research bodies to monitor and manage disaster prevention and preparedness has not been effective. Methods are not standard, approaches are piecemeal and so are the results. Costs for providing these services are much higher than if government were to do it. The researchers are usually over-qualified and do not match the profile for the tasks requested. Meanwhile, cutting-edge innovative research is neglected because researchers divert their energies to daily monitoring tasks.

Weak and malfunctioning services also have brought about distorted relations with the private sector. Companies can be very pro-active in seeking support for their own initiatives, which public administrators do not always have the means to assess. It is therefore essential that governments develop their own planning and control capacity in order to call for tenders through fair and transparent procedures.

Regarding the role of non-governmental organizations, they can be highly effective in coordinating voluntary services required by public authorities. Voluntary organizations are also helpful in drawing the attention of the general public to problems related to disasters.

Role of non-governmental organizations and private voluntary organizations in disaster reduction

Summary of presentation by Ms. Julia Taft, President and Chief Executive Officer, Interaction (United States of America)

Non-governmental organizations have become the primary implementors of disaster relief programmes, and, therefore, should be included in all phases of the planning and implementation process for disaster prevention and mitigation.

In that natural disasters tend to slow down or erase development progress, development and disaster professionals need to interact more effectively on disaster reduction programmes rather than to work separately and exclusively as is often the case.

While we have perfected much in the way of disaster early warning technology, too often government inaction and the lack of public awareness programmes renders these technologies useless. Non-governmental organizations as well as key players in the private sector are in the best position to mobilize people to act. Also, these organizations are best able to inform the public and local authorities on the availability of scientific and technological assistance for disaster prevention and early warning.

Although high-tech early warning systems are useful, the most critical factor in mitigating disasters is contingency planning based on lessons learned in prior disasters. Currently the disaster to development continuum is being widely discussed; however, development strategies seldom acknowledge the probability of recurrent drought, floods or other disasters. One exception is the drought prone Sahelian region of Africa where donors, NGOs and the affected governments have successfully integrated relief and development. In the Armenian earthquake, on the other hand, the lack of construction codes and standards and their enforcement resulted in the terrible loss of life, and clearly demonstrated that reliance on early warning systems or on contingency planning alone is not enough in many situations. Comprehensive policies, therefore, that account for disasters can significantly reduce the impact of disasters and save millions of development dollars in the process.

Given the dramatic increase in disasters over the past decade, there is a critical need to also increase the professionalism of NGO disaster workers at the international as well as the local, grass-roots levels. Disaster management is a relatively new field with few formal courses of study in technical schools or universities. It is, therefore, incumbent on the NGOs themselves in collaboration with donor governments and authorities and communities in disaster prone countries to raise their skills through training, and also to develop standards for positions in the field of disaster relief. Training as well as strategic relief programmes that strengthen local capacities can help lay the groundwork for successful rehabilitation, and ultimately development.

Disaster management in Africa: a social responsibility

Mr. A. Tevoedire, President, Centre africain de prospectives sociales (Benin)

If we look at a map of Africa showing the risks of various disasters, we can see that no African country is spared. If in addition we consider the complex crises which are now unfolding or appear to be imminent, the situation acquires a particular urgency and reflects the depth of the human tragedy of that continent.

The typical scenario of a natural (or other) disaster in an African country shows that:

- these countries, and in particular the local communities at risk, have not taken advantage of periods of peace and development to introduce preventive measures aimed at mitigating the risks;

- the authorities, once aware of the situation, direct their efforts towards mobilizing international aid, since they have no statutory relief plan, no specific inter-sectoral arrangements and no crisis management tools at their disposal;

- the haphazard delivery of international aid and the generally ad hoc approach, without any coordination between the various bodies involved, exacerbates the confusion at the scene of the disaster and compounds its effects;

- NGOs, virtually absent from the scene in normal times, spring up from nowhere when a disaster occurs, pursuing diverging aims;

- competition for humanitarian aid resources among the various bodies involved - public sector agencies, international NGOs and other international bodies, and newcomer local NGOs - completes the overall picture of chaos.

In this context, it would be inappropriate to focus exclusively on the role of African NGOs for the simple reason that current realities and practice in Africa prevent such organizations from playing a considered role within an overall plan.

The problem we are trying to bring out is beyond the capacity of the voluntary sector to solve on its own, and concerns above all the responsibility of the leaders. African leaders must realize that disaster management is one of their main responsibilities and one which requires the same level of preparation and planning as socio-economic development.

The countries of Africa must together develop policies and strategies calculated to reduce their vulnerability and enable them to respond promptly to

disasters, firstly, by using their own resources and, secondly, by taking advantage of international aid to complement and enhance action at local level.

Preparation for disasters, as an integral part of socio-economic development, must be based on collaboration between the public sector and NGOs, with a clear definition of the various roles and responsibilities of those bodies, and on appropriate training and public education to ensure that adequately qualified and experienced personnel are available.

The lack of coherent national policies and of local NGO involvement in disaster management has its roots in African culture: in the absence of any social security system, the extended family is expected to assist disaster victims.

However, if Africa wishes to mitigate the tragic consequences of disasters, a different approach will be needed and some fundamental issues will have to be readdressed: what is the central body in each country responsible for cataloguing disasters and assessing their impact? Are trained personnel available?

As regards the NGOs, steps should be taken to promote their creation and their involvement during normal times, so that they can develop their expertise and policies well in advance of crises and accordingly be able to do what is expected of them in an emergency. Their operational base within the communities at risk, their flexibility and their mobility make them a formidable tool for providing relief, particularly in the social domain.

Partnership role of non-governmental organizations in a new disaster management paradigm

Summary of presentation by Ms. Marcia Feria-Miranda*, Specialist in social marketing and partnership development (Philippines)

When disasters strike, they cut through artifice and social structures and reveal the cultural norms of a people. In the Philippines, the spirit of "bayanihan" or the Filipino spirit of cooperation naturally moves into place when volcanoes erupt and tropical cyclones destroy homes. Filipinos have a cultural basis for partnership and finding unity. It is one reason why partnerships, among NGOs, government and corporate sectors have formed to find ways to alleviate the ill effects of natural disasters.

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* Ms. Miranda is a specialist in social marketing and partnership development for disaster management. She designs and evaluates development programmes for the Association of Foundation (121 NGOs), the Corporate Network for Disaster Response, USAID, the World Bank, UNDP and others.

The Philippine NGO sector is one of the most dynamic in south-east Asia. It numbers in the tens of thousands. The participation of NGOs in Philippine development is mandated by law and circumstance. In a country where poverty is a blight and the government bureaucracy can be ineffective, private social development organizations have learned to combine criticism with action in the field.

Philippine disasters in recent years have forced Philippine civil society, with NGOs in the forefront to participate in disaster relief, resettlement and rehabilitation work. Corporations, whose workers were also victims of calamities, joined in sharing their resources to hasten the return to normalcy. Networks or partnerships for disaster response were formed among NGOs and among corporations who realized that no one sector possessed all the expertise required.

Why from partnerships? The resources for the magnitude of need are limited. Partnerships help stretch out meagreness. They help in knowledge sharing. They filter out the real NGOs from the fly-by-night NGO merchant. They provide a formal mechanism where government and private groups can speak on equal footing and minimize finger pointing. They help deliver sustainable assistance to displaced poor communities who after the volcanic eruption need jobs, roads, bridges and shelter.

There are questions now raised on how effective disaster relief partnerships have been in terms of getting things back to normal. On one hand, it is becoming apparent that not all organizations have the capability to participate in relief work with the efficiency, for example, of the Philippine National Red Cross. Relief has been observed to be often longer than a week, extending in some disasters to over six months. Non-governmental organizations looked for new roles that matched their capabilities.

The Philippine disaster experience has vividly shown that it is the disadvantaged communities that are the main victims of natural disasters. Relief does not automatically put them on their feet. Disaster after disaster the same communities are affected. Programmes other than relief are needed. Resettlement. Rehabilitation. Preparedness. Mitigation and prevention. NGOs need not crowd the relief begging bowl. There is room for all.

Poverty and the demands of sustainable development dictate the need for a new definition of disaster management that looks beyond the present linear concept of relief. A new paradigm that sees the interlocking reality between disasters and development.

There are blocks to the acceptance of this new paradigm. The first block is within government, donors and the NGOs themselves. Disaster relief is placed on a separate floor away from discussions of environmental degradation and land use planning. An acceptance of the paradigm will mean breaking up of divisions, changes in donor aid guidelines and NGO development programming.

A second is that there are no recipes for a disaster management partnership. The scale and complexity of a disaster dictates a unique mix of organizational resources and expertise. The disaster must cease to be viewed as a military logistical exercise.

A third is the attitude that disaster management is mainly the government's job. This has marked disasters as political exercises and heightened minute mistakes and diminished good public sector work. Civil society and NGOs have shown that they are effective partners in the work.

A fourth is our inability to accept the fact that at the heart of the disaster is a community of people who need to participate in planning their own future. A multitude of top-down decisions based on a score of national and international master plans compound the disaster by creating another disaster in themselves.

Non-governmental organizations are uniquely placed to bridge the transition to a new view on disasters that links it to sustainable development. As groups of citizens, they better understand the needs of communities at risk and as private organizations providing public services, they can better understand formal structures and responses.

Cost of disasters: areas of cooperation with the insurance industry

Summary of presentation by Mr. Gerhard Berz, Munich Reinsurance Company, (Germany)

Economic and insured losses from natural disasters have increased dramatically over the past few decades and most pronouncedly over the past seven years. If current trends persist, the annual loss amounts will double by the end of this decade, coming close to US$ 150 billion, of which roughly one third will be insured. Even some individual "worst case" disasters may exceed the US$ 100 billion mark.

In many insurance markets, natural hazards are covered by various classes of insurance. This entails making a close study of such perils to correctly estimate premium requirements, on the one hand, and loss potential on the other. To this end, insurers can draw upon extensive loss data and analyses from all parts of the world.

Insurance has an appreciable influence on the behaviour of the public and that of industry with regard to preparedness and mitigation. By making the right use of the instruments of insurance, especially deductibles, the insured can be motivated to take preventive measures. Following a disaster, the insurance industry provides prompt financial help and has, for the most part, an efficient loss settlement organization available for this purpose.

In the field of disaster preparedness, mitigation and relief, there are many areas of possible cooperation between the insurance industry and governmental, non-governmental and scientific institutions, as well as industry and the media. These include:

- Mapping of hazard zones;
- Assessment of loss potentials for disaster scenarios;
- Recommendations for regulations or restrictions on land use;
- Promotion and use of warning systems;
- Information, education and motivation of the public, industry and organizations;
- Analysis of disaster losses;
- Compilation of lists of competent institutions and experts.

Role of the private sector in disaster management

Summary of presentation by Mr. R. Natarajan, President, Union Carbide, Asia Pacific (Singapore)

Economies in the Asia Pacific are rapidly growing. So, too, are the number of deaths from industrial accidents. While these industrial accidents can happen on their own, they can also be the by-product of natural disasters.

Partly for these reasons, more and more countries and industries are becoming conscious of environmental protection and sustainable development. Greater attention is being paid to safe operation of plants and the safety of products. The great engineering works of the future will not be bigger dams and bridges, but more likely to be improved sewage works and safe waste disposal.

Industry has discovered that environmentalism is cost-effective. Green products based on green processes lead to better quality products, they protect the environment, and they are appealing to consumers. In the chemical industry, Responsible Care's product stewardship code commits its members to making health, safety and environmental protection an integral part of the company's business, all the way from product design to ultimate product disposal.

Prevention and mitigation of natural disasters needs to be linked to these trends. Some things are obvious, and are generally taken into account - an industrial plant should not be sited in a major city; a "green belt" can be built around a plant so that homes do not spring up right next to it. Based on the lessons learned in linking industrial growth and environmental protection, more could be done to ensure that natural disasters are taken into account in the development process.

While global industries have increased their obligations, efforts and successes in protecting the environment, and non-governmental organizations have been catalytic in getting government to do the right thing, many governments have no clear, cost-effective long-term sustainable and integrated policies for disasters and development. Standards are often lacking and on the other hand the crisis approach leading to "end of pipe" controls and over regulation is frequent. Government inspectors often lack the training and awareness to be a real party to the greening process under way in companies. Lack of political commitment to change the status quo leads to insufficient public awareness and education. Political leadership is not promoting a strong partnership between sectors.

There is much that industry can do in a partnership for sustainable development that takes disasters into account. It can work with government to develop standards and long-term policies. As an integral part of the community, industries can promote disaster preparedness through employee training, public education and simulation exercises. Industries can work with NGOs to build capacities for response, jointly provide community education and put buffer stocks and other resources into place.

Natural disasters are often measured in human suffering and property losses. Often overlooked are how many problems natural disasters can cause for business. Just as overlooked is the potential for technological disasters to occur as a by-product of natural disasters. Herein lies the opportunity to motivate government to form partnerships with industry and NGOs for prevention and mitigation of disasters.

This partnership could be the basis for broad-based country disaster management teams. Such teams could help refine government policies and vision on environment, disasters and development; help the private sector protect their interests and those of the community by allowing them to contribute in planning, logistic support and other resources; and enhance the effectiveness of voluntary organizations in building political and public awareness, by giving them a structured forum to participate in prevention and mitigation.